



Missoula County

INTEGRATED PLANT MANAGEMENT

FACT SHEET NO. 7

Is it Time to Prune?

Shade trees, fruit trees, and all types of shrubs, including fruit-producing raspberries, require pruning. Pruning maximizes growth, health, flower, and fruit production.

Pruning at the *right* time is the key and varies, depending on the plant. Shrub pruning has been divided into two groups and tree pruning is varied by type.

The following discussion will hopefully help you with your pruning questions.

Shrubs

GROUP 1

These shrubs need to be pruned **after** flowering. It's at that time that they have a chance to grow the branches that will flower the following year.

These shrubs are:

Barberry (*Berberis*)
Forsythia
Honeysuckle (*Lonicera*)
Lilac (*Syringa*)
Mock Orange (*Philadelphus*)
Ninebark (*Physocarpus*)
Spiraea (spring-blooming varieties)

Leadplant
Ocean spray (*Holodiscus*)
Nanking & Sand cherry,
 Flowering Almond, Rose
 Tree of China (*Prunus* sp)
Rabbitbush (*Chrysothamnus*)
Raspberries, flowering &
 fruiting (*Rubus* species)
Sagebrush, Southernwood,
 Wormwood (*Artemisia*)
Serviceberry
Spiraea (*all species that*
 bloom in summer)
Viburnum

GROUP 2

Prune these shrubs **after** buds have begun to swell but before buds turn green in the spring:

American elder, elderberries
Buckthorn (*Rhamnus*)
Bush honeysuckle (*Diervilla*
 sessilifolia)
Caragana
Cotoneaster
Dogwoods (*Red twig*)
Euonymus (*spreading euonymus*)
Hydrangea

Shade Trees

Prune shade trees during dormancy (winter through early spring) because it's the best time to see and correct potential structure problems. Pruning shade trees during leaf emergence, or in the fall before leaf drop is complete, is the **worst** time to prune.

Some shade tree species, such as birch and maple, secrete sap when pruned during their peak growth

period or during a warm weather period in the winter. This is normal and not a problem; but to avoid secretion (“bleeding”,) wait until the tree leafs out and its peak growth has slowed before undertaking major pruning.

Fruit Trees

Prune out fireblight infected branches or borer infested branches any time you notice them. Prune fireblight wood 8 inches to 12 inches *below* the area on the branch that is dead or shriveled. Sterilize pruning equipment between cuts. Major pruning should be done during the delayed dormant period (late winter to early spring) just as buds begin to swell.

Fruiting Shrubs

RASPBERRIES

These fruiting shrubs come in two types:

1. First-year fruiting canes, and
2. Second-year fruiting canes.

To prune FIRST-YEAR fruiting canes, cut canes close to the ground in late winter or early spring. New canes will grow and produce fruit in late summer.

For tender cultivars and non-diseased canes, prune old fruiting canes in late winter or early spring.

Head back remaining vigorous canes (the ones that have grown too tall) in late winter to early spring.

Evergreen Shrubs & Trees

Prune dead or diseased branches as they appear. Thin bottom branches to lift them off the ground and to shape them *after* the coldest winter weather has passed but *before* the warmer weather (>50°F.) sends the plants their “wake-up” message.

TIPS

- Larch trees lose their needles in the fall and will grow new ones in the spring;
 - Tip back new shoots on Mugho pines yearly to prevent leggy appearance;
 - Thin out branches of Colorado Blue Spruce to decrease wind damage potential;
 - Shape junipers, cedars, and arborvitae by removing tips from sides and top of the shrub during late winter through late spring. Make these “thinning cuts” just above outward-growing buds or branches. Thin top branches to prevent shading of lower limbs.
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